VISIT…

HOUSE OF HARPIES

A short adventure for four 6th-level player characters

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d20 system

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INTRODUCTION

The local thieves' guild survives by hiding outside of town, in the nearby forest. Since the thieves confine their predatory efforts to within the city, local druids and rangers have no reason to look for them, and the town guard concentrates its efforts within the town's walls. Over the past several decades, the guild managed to build a well-concealed hideout in one of the large evergreen trees near the town. This allows the thieves to plan and plot in safety, gives them a place to rest and hide if things get too hot, and lets them check caravans coming into the city for likely targets.

Unfortunately for the guild, their ideal hideout attracted a flight of harpies that moved into the area. The harpies like the hideout for many of the same reasons the thieves do, and have driven the thieves out and taken up residence. The thieves managed to escape with most of their secret documents and important possessions, but now lack a good, secure base of operations. The leader of the harpies, a particularly nasty creature named Irith, hopes to use the treehouse base as a headquarters from which she will expand her flight, becoming a force in the area with which to be reckoned.

PREPARATION

You, the Dungeon Master (DM), need a copy of the *Player's Handbook*, the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*, and the *Monster Manual* to use this adventure.

Text that appears in shaded boxes is player information, which you may read aloud or paraphrase when appropriate. Unshaded boxes contain important information for you, including special instructions. Monster and NPC statistics are provided with each encounter in full.

This adventure uses one of the elven tree base maps from the January Map a Week feature on the D&D website. It is is available for download at <http://www.wizards.com/dnd/images/mapofweek/Jan_56b4EF89r.jpg>. The map is reprinted here for your convenience.

CHARACTER HOOKS

This adventure can be inserted in any wilderness setting or just outside any city. It provides a good side trek to get groups out of the dungeons and more involved in outdoor and possibly urban adventures. It could take place as part of a larger adventure centered on the

nearby town, or could be used as a standalone encounter with Irith and her flight. Although the treehouse is set in an evergreen, it could easily be moved to a large tree appropriate in any climate, allowing the adventure to be set nearly anywhere. You can use one of the character hooks below to get the characters interested in the area around the treehouse.

- A flying bat-creature of some sort, possibly a monstrous bard, has been seen and heard in the area. It seems to be able to mesmerize people with the sound of its voice. A few caravans have disappeared entirely, and a local collection of merchants are willing to pay 1000 gp to whoever can get rid of the creature.
- A group of griffins are believed to have moved into the local forest. Numerous entrepreneurs have begun searching large trees for griffin nests, hoping to find eggs to sell.
- The thieves need to reclaim their base without attracting any official attention. A member of the party with underworld contacts is asked to accept the job of clearing out the nest without any of the local guards becoming aware of their efforts.
- Rumor claims that the songs heard in the forest are from an ancient magic harp, lost in the area hundreds of years ago.

TREE FEATURES

Most likely at some point characters are going to end up climbing up or down the trunk of the tree or moving along some of its branches. The tree's trunk is a DC 15 to climb. A character can move along a tree limb with a Climb check (DC 15) or Balance check (DC 10 within 10 ft. of the trunk, DC 20 further out). The thieves intentionally kept the interior of the treehouse rough so it can be climbed. The walls are DC 15 to climb, and the ceiling DC 20. The ladder linking the treehouse's levels is a DC 5 to climb.

Remember that a climbing character or balancing character with less than 5 ranks of Balance loses his Dexterity bonus to AC and that attacks get a +2 bonus to attack either climbing or balancing characters. A character struck while climbing or balancing must make an additional skill check or fall.

THE LAYOUT OF THE TREEHOUSE

Note that the scale of the room maps is 2.5 ft. per square, but the side-view is at double that scale (making the tree 400-ft. tall). The lowest layer of the treehouse is 140 ft. off the ground and 20 ft. tall. The second layer is 20 ft. above the first, and the third and fourth each 10 ft above the layer below them. Each of the four layers has a ladder access from above, meaning you must climb over a level to its top before you can climb down into it (normally there would always be a guild member on duty to lower a rope to anyone allowed in).

The lowest layer of the treehouse has areas 6-9. The next layer up has areas 10-13, the third layer areas 1-3 and the topmost lookout post areas 4 and 5. Since the harpies have darkvision to a range of 60 feet, they've made no effort to illuminate any of the treehouse's rooms. The thieves built the treehouse without windows (to increase its camouflage value), so unless the characters provide their own light or can see in darkness, they won't be able to see in any of the rooms described below.

Area 6: The Main Hall (EL 6)

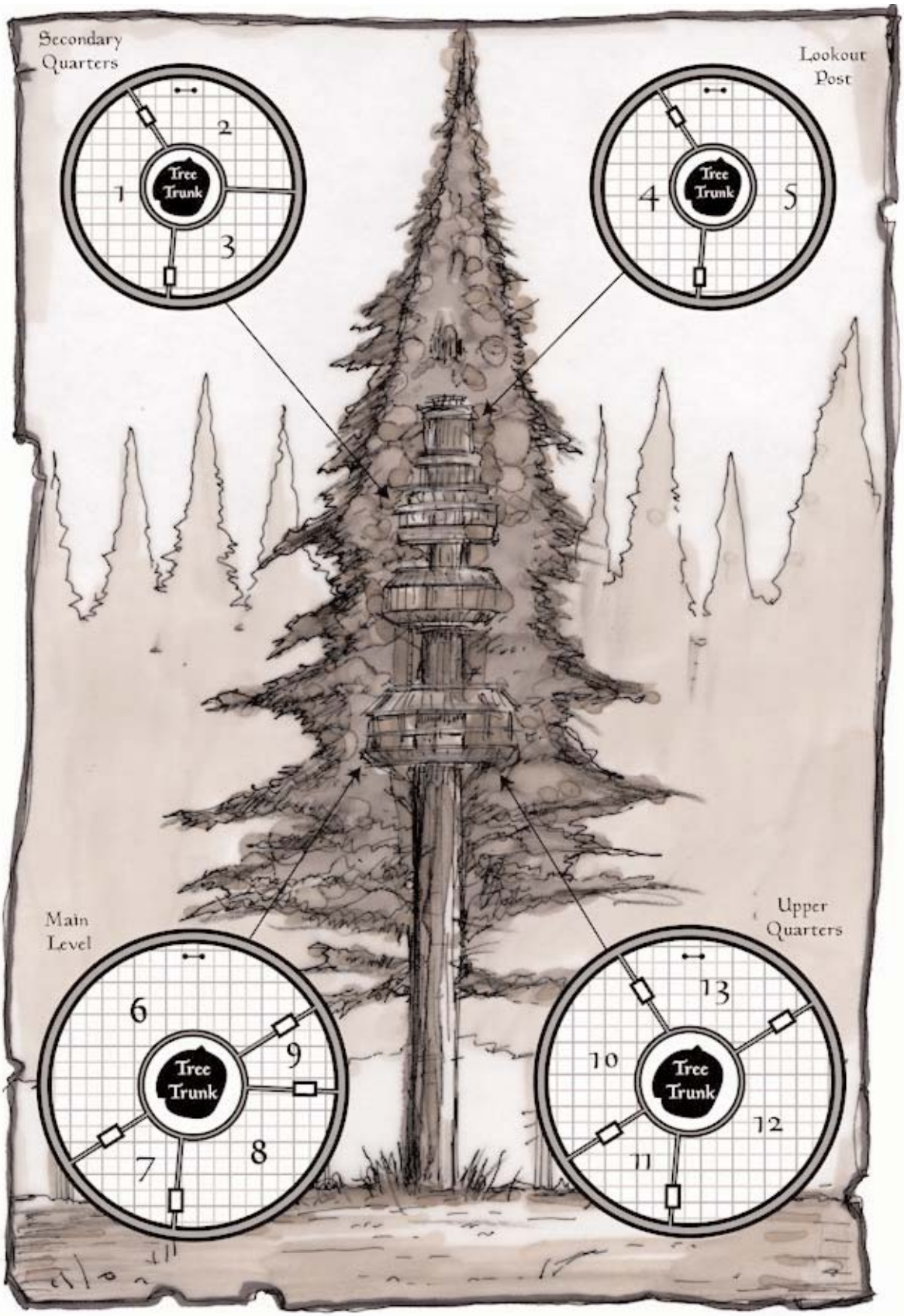
A ladder in the center of the room leads down into a floor covered in filth and rot. The room is a semi-circle five roughly 15-feet wide and 50-feet in diameter, with a door at either end. The thick smell of waste and musk fill the air, overpowering any other scent. Piles of broken furniture, decomposing food and torn, bright fabrics line the curved walls, with random refuse scattered across the floor and smeared onto the wooden walls. A few small holes, no more than a foot across, are visible in the walls.

This room was originally the treehouse's main hall, where members of the thieves' guild met in secret. The harpies have intentionally trashed it to encourage a pack of dire rats to move in and make a nest. Assuming the characters have not already fought some of the dire rats, twenty of the creatures live here, though no more than ten are likely to be present at a time. The rats hide (Spot DC 21), and will not attack the characters unless they begin digging through the refuse.

Dire Rats (20): CR 1/3; small animal; HD 1d8+1; hp 5 ea.; Init +3; Spd 40 ft., climb 20 ft.; AC 15 (touch 14, flat-footed 12); Atk +4 melee (1d4, bite); SA Disease; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +5, Will +3; Str 10, Dex 17, Con 12, Int 1, Wis 12, Cha 4.

Skills and Feats: Climb +11, Hide +11, Move Silently +6; Weapon Finesse (bite).

Disease (Ex): Filth fever — bite. Fortitude save (DC 12), incubation period 1–3 days; damage 1d3 temporary Dexterity and 1d3 temporary Constitution (see Disease in chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*).


Secondary Quarters
Lookout Post
Main Level
Upper Quarters
Tree Trunk
1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13

Irith's Tactics

Irith is a cunning foe, and has no interest in taking on a well-armed group of adventurers in a fair fight. She does her best top ambush them, wear them down, and weaken them before they reach her own nest. Irith normally stay in area 1 when not out hunting for prey, and she only preys on targets that are alone. She always has at least one harpy in the treehouse's lookout post, so she is likely aware of the characters' approach to the treehouse unless the heroes take steps to remain hidden.

If aware of the characters' approach, Irith sends the two harpies from area 12 to go attack them and assess how powerful they are. These harpies make a few flyby attacks and try to use their captivating song to get a few characters away from the main party. If they seem likely to lose a fight with the characters, the two harpies fly away and circle back to report to Irith. In this case, Irith does her best to ambush the heroes when they're most vulnerable — likely while climbing on the outside of one of the highest layer of the treehouse.

Irith has encouraged the dire rats in area 6 to make a nest there so they are available for her to summon with her *pipes of the sewers*. Irith uses this item whenever she's directly threatened, or the characters seem vulnerable to being overwhelmed by their numbers. Even if the heroes manage to drive off the dire rats, the survivors stay within 400 feet of the tree and can be summoned again by the pipes.

Irith does not want to be driven out of her new nest, but if it becomes obvious she can't overcome the characters, she flees through the air at her best possible speed, ordering any remanding harpies to remain to fight the characters and help cover her escape.

Area 7: The Kitchens

This curved room is roughly 15-feet wide and 20-feet long. A door sits at either end of the room. Tipped tables line the walls. The remnants of small lamps that had been fitted with metal plates to allow food to be cooked lie scattered around the room. The floor is slick, covered in a thin lair of oil from the smashed cooking lamps.

This was the small kitchen that allowed the treehouse to serve small, informal meals. The cooking lamps allowed food to be reheated but were not really appropriate for fully-cooking raw food. They were tipped when the harpies attacked, and the oil has never been cleaned up. Moving cautiously isn't a problem, but anyone running or fighting in this room must make a Reflex save (DC 13) each round to avoid falling. If the oil comes in contact with fire, the whole room erupts into flames dealing 2d4 points of damage (Reflex save for half, DC 15) each round for 3d4 rounds. The treehouse was built of wood treated to resist fires, so the conflagration won't spread beyond this room unless the characters do something to encourage it.

Area 8: Pantry

A thick stench of rot fills this 15-feet by 40-feet wedge-shaped room. Broken barrels and splintered wooden boxes fill it. Traces of rotting food still show in cracks and crevices between the broken containers. A door sits at each end of the room.

This room is full of rusty nails from the crates and sharp shards of broken pottery and glass. Anyone moving through this room who doesn't have at least a +2 armor or natural armor bonus to AC needs to make a Reflex save (DC 10) or take 1 hit point of damage. A character is then exposed to the red ache disease (Fortitude save DC 15, id3 day incubation period, initial damage 1d6 points of Strength - for more information see Chapter 3 of the *Dungeon Masters Guide*). A Search check (DC 10) reveals both this danger and a safe path through the room.

Area 9: Cloakroom

A few tattered pieces of cloth line the floor of this 15- foot long room. Small brass hooks line the curved walls, and empty shelves run above the hooks. Doors sit at each end of the room. There is a small hole near the floor of the outside wall.

This was the treehouse's cloakroom, where visiting members of the guild would drop off packages and hang outerwear. A single dire rat makes its nest along the outer shelf, but it is hiding (Spot DC 21 to notice it), and doesn't attack unless the characters search the top shelf.

SECOND LEVEL

Area 10: Meeting Room (EL 8)

Four nests made of broken chairs and fouled clothes sit in this thirty-five foot long room, one to either side of each of the two doors, located at either end of the room.

If the characters haven't dealt with the harpies from this room yet, add the following.

Within each nest sits a horrid, hag-like creature with long claws and huge bat-like wings.

These are the four youngest and weakest harpies in Irith's flight, and they're not likely to be encountered

anywhere other than on this level. These harpies are brash and arrogant, and fight to the death if attacked. If encountered outside of area 10 the young harpies have armed themselves with clubs (+7/+2 melee, 1d4 damage), otherwise they attack only with two claws (+7 melee, 1d3 damage per claw).

If it's night time and the characters come in quietly, the harpies are asleep and the characters can get a surprise round of action. If its daylight the harpies are awake, and no one gets a surprise round. The harpies try to use their captivating songs to lure the characters to them, but give up singing and defend themselves if attacked. If the harpies in area 12 haven't been dealt with yet they definitely hear a prolonged fight in here unless the characters take steps to prevent it (such as cast a *silence* spell). If it can obviously be determined by the sound of the fight that it's going against the harpies here, the ones in area 12 flee to warn Irith.

Young Harpies (4); CR 4; Medium-size monstrous humanoid; HD 7d8–7; hp 29, 28, 24, 22; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 13 (touch 12, flat-footed 11); Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6, club) and +2 melee (1d3, 2 claws); SA Captivating song; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 8, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +4, Listen +7, Perform (buffoonery, chant, epic, limericks, melody, ode, storytelling) +9, Spot +6; Dodge, Flyby Attack.

Captivating Song (Su): When a young harpy sings, all creatures (other than harpies) within a 300-foot spread must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or become utterly captivated. This is a sonic, mind-affecting charm. If the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by that harpy's song for one day.

A captivated victim walks toward the harpy, taking the most direct route available. If the path leads into a dangerous area (through flame, off a cliff, etc.), that creature gets a second saving throw. Captivated creatures can take no actions other than to defend themselves. (Thus, a fighter cannot run away or attack but suffers no defensive penalties.) A victim within 5 feet of the harpy stands there and offers no resistance to the monster's attacks. The effect continues for as long as the harpy sings. A bard's countersong ability allows the captivated creature to attempt a new Will save.

Possessions: Each of the young harpies has a *potion of cure moderate wounds*, the harpy with 29 hit points wears a *necklace of fireballs (Type I)*.

Area 11: Infirmary

Smashed pottery, broken tables, and ripped bandages line the floor of this 15-foot long room. Several pastes and poultices are smeared across the floor, and from them a strong, herbal smell fills the room and overwhelms any other scents. A door sits at either end of the room. A thin layer of dust covers everything in this room.

This was the treehouse's infirmary, for dealing with the injuries of wanted thieves who couldn't seek help in town. The harpies smashed it along with everything else in the treehouse, but found they hated the smell and haven't been in since. If a character smears some of the poultices on themselves, any harpy attacking them suffers a -1 penalty to their first melee attack against the character.

Area 12: Thieves' Quarters (EL 6)

Two large nests of torn furnishings and tree boughs dominate the center of this 45-foot long room. There are claw marks along the walls, and a few dark stains soaked into the wooden planks of the floor. Broken bunk beads line the walls, and a door can be found at each end of the room.

If the characters haven't already faced the two harpies that live here, they're hiding behind two of the bunk beds (this is where the harpies sleep, the nests are just a decoy). A Spot check (DC 12) allows a character to see the harpies as they leap out to attack on a surprise round. Any characters that don't notice the harpies hiding can not act on the surprise round.

These two are Irith's second and third in command of the flight. They're cunning old creatures, who have fought many battles before. Each harpy is armed with a +1 bone club. They won't try to win a fight that's clearly going against them, instead attempting to flee and warn Irith of the invader's presence.

The nests do contain the harpies' possessions, which can be found by a thorough investigation (Search DC 15). There are 200 gold pieces hidden in the two nests as well as four small, polished stones worth 5 gp each.

Harpies (2); CR 4; Medium-size monstrous humanoid; HD 7d8+7; hp 36, 34; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 14 (touch 12, flat-footed 12); Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6, club) and +2 melee (1d3, 2 claws); SA Captivating song; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +4, Listen +7, Perform (buffoonery, chant, epic, limericks, melody, ode, storytelling) +9, Spot +6; Dodge, Flyby Attack.

Captivating Song (Su): When a harpy sings, all creatures (other than harpies) within a 300-foot spread must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or become utterly captivated. This is a sonic, mind-affecting charm. If the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by that harpy's song for one day.

A captivated victim walks toward the harpy, taking the most direct route available. If the path leads into a dangerous area (through flame, off a cliff, etc.), that creature gets a second saving throw. Captivated creatures can take no actions other than to defend themselves. (Thus, a fighter cannot run away or attack but suffers no defensive penalties.) A victim within 5 feet of the harpy stands there and offers no resistance to the monster's attacks. The effect continues for as long as the harpy sings. A bard's countersong ability allows the captivated creature to attempt a new Will save.

Possessions: Each harpy wears *bracers of armor +1.*

Area 13: Storeroom

A ladder in the center of the room leads down into a floor covered in filth and rot. The room is a semi-circle five roughly 15- feet wide and 30-feet in diameter, with a door at either end. Several torn and tattered bodies lay in a heap at the center of the room, a dark stain surrounding the floor around it. Several large crates line the outside wall, with only a few showing signs of being pried open.

This was the treehouse's storeroom, where the various dry goods (rope, travel rations, cloth - 400 gp worth of mundane sundries) were kept. When the harpies took over, they made this their prey room, where victims of their horrid songs were brought to be tortured before being killed and eaten. Ten bodies are piled in the center of the room - all merchants and townsfolk who were found alone and lured off by the harpies captivating songs. Careful examination of the bodies reveals that they have be gnawed upon and stripped of most of their flesh. All that remains are tattered clothes and a few items that fell while the harpies fed on them (150 gp worth of random coins and small gems).

If the characters make any loud noises in this room, have any harpies in areas 10 and 12 that haven't already been dealt with make Listen checks (DC 10 to 20, depending on how loud the characters are) to notice the intrusion. Any harpies that hear the characters burst into the room two rounds later and attack the characters.

THIRD LEVEL

Area 1: Guildmaster's Room (EL 6)

This wedge shaped room is about 12-feet wide and 25-feet long. It is dominated by a huge bed that has had a large, tattered nest built There is a door at either end of the room.

If Irith has been warned of the character's approach, she lays an ambush for them. She has any harpies available wait to fight the characters in this area, while she remains hidden in area 3. She uses the pipes of the sewers to summon any remaining rats early in the fight, and tries to single out a spellcaster or bard to target with her captivating song.

If surprised, Irith attempts to escape either up to area 5 or down to area 12 to gather reinforcements. She uses the pipes to cover her escape if need be. If any fight seems to be going badly against her, Irith flees rather than fight to the death.

If Irith hasn't needed to cast *mage armor* by the time she goes to sleep at sundown, she casts an *alarm* spell on the trapdoor into area 2. The *alarm* lasts 4 hours, so if the characters move into area 2 in the four hours after sundown, Irith is warned. If Irith is attacked after she has awoken from a full night's sleep and before the goes to bed, she casts *mage armor* on herself, increasing her AC by 4.

Irith; Harpy Brd2; CR 6; Medium-size monstrous humanoid; HD 7d8+7 plus 2d6+2; hp 47; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 14 (touch 13, flat-footed 12); Atk +8/+3 melee (1d6, club) and +3 melee (1d3, 2 claws); SA Captivating song; SQ Bardic knowledge +0, bardic music (countersong, *fascinate,* inspire competence, inspire courage) 2/day, darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +3, Ref +10, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, Diplomacy +5, Intimidate +5, Listen +11, Perform (buffoonery, chant, epic, limericks, melody, ode, storytelling) +10, Spot +8; Alertness, Dodge, Flyby Attack.

Captivating Song (Su): When Irith sings, all creatures (other than harpies) within a 300-foot spread must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or become utterly captivated. This is a sonic, mind-affecting charm. If the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by Irith's song for one day.

A captivated victim walks toward Irith, taking the most direct route available. If the path leads into a dangerous area (through flame, off a cliff, etc.), that creature gets a second saving throw. Captivated creatures can take no actions other than to defend themselves. (Thus, a fighter cannot run away or attack but suffers no defensive penalties.)

A victim within 5 feet of Irith stands there and offers no resistance to her attacks. The effect continues for as long as Irith sings. A bard's countersong ability allows the captivated creature to attempt a new Will save.

Bardic Knowledge: Irith may make a bardic knowledge check with a bonus of +0 to see whether he knows some relevant information about local notable people, legendary items, or noteworthy places.

Bardic Music: Irith can use her song or poetics to produce magical effects on those around her. *Countersong (Su):* Irith can counter magical effects that depend on sound by making a Perform check for each round of countersong. Any creature within 30 ft. of her who is affected by a sonic or language-dependent magical attack may use Irith's Perform check result in place of his or her saving throw if desired. Countersong lasts for 10 rounds.

Fascinate (Su): Irith can cause a single creature within 90 ft. that can see and hear her to become fascinated with her. Irith's Perform check result is the DC for the opponent's Will save. Any obvious threat breaks the effect. *Fascination* lasts 2 rounds.

Inspire Courage (Su): Each ally who can hear Irith receives a +2 morale bonus on saves against charm and fear effects and a +1 morale bonus on attack and weapon damage rolls. The effect lasts for 5 rounds after the ally can no longer hear Irith.

Bard Spells Known: (3/1; base DC = 13 + spell level): 0 — *daze, ghost sound, light, read magic, resistance*; 1st — *alarm, mage armor.*

Possessions: Ring of protection +1, pipes of the sewers, potion of cure light wounds.

Area 2: Antechamber

A ladder at one end of the room leads down into a smooth hardwood floor clean of any debris. Four wood and leather chairs are arranged casually around the room, and a small table sits in the center. A single door at one end of the room is the only other exit.

If the character's enter through the trapdoor any time within four hours of sundown, an *alarm* spell silently warns Irith to their entrance (see area 1).

Area 3: Treasure Chamber

This curved room is about 12- feet wide and 20-feet long, and is accessed by a single door. It is bare except for a single ironbound, oaken chest sitting in the center of the room.

This was the guildmaster's treasure chamber, where he kept his personal treasure and items placed within the guild's care. Most of the treasure was successfully removed when the thieves evacuated, but a single chest was left behind. The chest has a heavy padlock on it, which is difficult to pick open (Open Locks DC 30). The chest itself has a hardness of 5 and 20 hit points. However, it contains six potions of *cure light wounds*, and these break if the chest is destroyed. The chest also has ten very small rubies of high quality, each worth 20 gp, which survive the chest's destruction.

FOURTH LEVEL

Area 4: Emergency Storage

The wedge shaped room is about 12-feet wide and 30-feet long. It is almost entire taken up by several large barrels. Three huge coils of knotted rope sit atop the barrels. The outer wall has numerous peepholes placed five feet from the floor, each no more than two inches across and covered by a leather flap. There is a door at either end of the room.

Although still designed to be part of the lookout this area is also used for storage of several large barrels of water (in case the treehouse catches fire) and three 15-foot long silk ropes.

Area 5: Main Lookout Post (EL 4)

This semi-circular room is about 12-feet wide and 60-feet long. The outer wall has numerous peepholes placed five feet from the floor, each no more than two inches across and covered by a leather flap. A single harpy perches on a ladder near the middle of the room, looking outward.

If the characters approach this room from the outside, the harpy is likely to see them and give a warning cry before flying down to warn Irith. If the characters manage to get into this room through some other route, they may well surprise the harpy, getting a surprise round against it before it can fly off. If the harpy discovers Irith has already been defeated, it attempts to flee.

Lookout Harpy; CR 4; Medium-size monstrous humanoid; HD 7d8; hp 31; Init +2; Spd 20 ft., fly 80 ft. (average); AC 13 (touch 12, flat-footed 11); Atk +7/+2 melee (1d6, club) and +2 melee (1d3, 2 claws); SA Captivating song; SQ Darkvision 60 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 7, Wis 10, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +8, Diplomacy +4, Intimidate +4, Listen +7, Perform (buffoonery, chant, epic, limericks, melody, ode, storytelling) +9, Spot +11; Dodge, Flyby Attack.

Captivating Song (Su): When a harpy sings, all creatures (other than harpies) within a 300-foot spread must succeed at a Will save (DC 15) or become utterly captivated. This is a sonic, mind-affecting charm. If the save is successful, that creature cannot be affected again by that harpy's song for one day.

A captivated victim walks toward the harpy, taking the most direct route available. If the path leads into a dangerous area (through flame, off a cliff, etc.), that creature gets a second saving throw. Captivated creatures can take no actions other than to defend themselves. (Thus, a fighter cannot run away or attack but suffers no defensive penalties.) A victim within 5 feet of the harpy stands there and offers no resistance to the monster's attacks. The effect continues for as long as the harpy sings. A bard's countersong ability allows the captivated creature to attempt a new Will save.

Possessions: Quaal's feather token (tree), eyes of the eagle, potion of cure light wounds.

FURTHER ADVENTURES

If Irith or any of her flight escape, they're likely to remember the characters and attempt to make allies powerful enough to help destroy them. If the characters undertook this adventure to help the thieves' guild, they are all made honorary members and given access to the treehouse for future operations in the area, and may ask them for further help in the future. If the characters weren't working for the thieves' guild, the guild writes off the treehouse as unrecoverable and the characters can negotiate with the local lord to possibly use it themselves. Of course in that case the guild feels the characters owe the thieves a new base of operations, and attempt to find some way to make them pay for one.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Owen K.C. Stephens was born in 1970 in Norman, Oklahoma, and attended the local high school and the University of Oklahoma. He enrolled in creative writing courses taught by FORGOTTEN REALMS® novel author Mel Odom and later attended the TSR Writer's Workshop in 1997. Owen's first work in the adventure game field was an article on elven names in issue 250 of *DRAGON® Magazine*. He moved with his wife to the Seattle area in 2000 after accepting a job at Wizards, but returned to Oklahoma in 2001 to resume his career as a freelance writer. Owen can be reached at <OStephens@aol.com>.